



NEWS RELEASE

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AUBURN WATER SYSTEM, INC. GROUNDBREAKING

AUBURN, FL, March 24, 2004 — An increasing number of residents in and around the community of Auburn, located in Okaloosa County in northwest Florida, are enjoying a dependable supply of clean water flowing from their spigots. With assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, today's groundbreaking marks construction of Phase 2 of a \$3 million project that is bringing much needed water system improvements to the area.

Auburn Water Systems is a not-for-profit corporation formed many years ago to provide community water service to the unincorporated community of Auburn and other small unincorporated communities in the area north and east of Crestview, the Okaloosa County seat. Providing water to a county designated service area of 4,223 customers, the current water system had become inadequate, with an insufficient system supply and failing storage facilities that did not support the demand of the growing community. The two phase project totals \$3,032,000, with \$1,917,855 in loan funds from USDA Rural Development allocated in Phase 1 and \$1,114,145 allocated in Phase 2. Phase 1 was completed in November 2002 and included construction of a new well in the vicinity of US Highway 90 and State Road 393 and three elevated storage tanks. Phase 2 of the project will include the construction of a new 750 GPM water well and a new 500,000 gallon water tank on a 3.5 acre site located on State Road 85.

During a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the new facilities, Rural Development State Director Charles Clemons, Sr., said, "Today's groundbreaking reaffirms the commitment made by Rural Development three years ago when Auburn Water System requested assistance in making water system improvements for the residents of Auburn and the surrounding communities. The funding from USDA Rural Development to make the system improvements is important to the health and safety of area residents, and in creating economic vitality. This facility is an investment in the future and supports President Bush's economic agenda for an economically and socially strong rural America."

Rural Development is the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers financial and technical assistance through Rural Housing Programs, Rural Business-Cooperative Programs and Rural Utilities Programs. USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on USDA Rural Development can be obtained by contacting any USDA Service Center or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/fl>

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